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Rev. MARK HOPKINS, D.D., LL.D.

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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

The Alumni of Williams College,

IN LOVE AND HONOR OF

Rev. Mark Hopkins, D.D., LL.D.

— BY —

DAVID DUDLEY FIELD,

TUESDAY, JUNE 26TH,

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1888

Mark Hopkins

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MARK HOPKINS.

Mr. President and Fellow-Alumni :

In the year 1819 three youths met for the first time in the academy at Stockbridge. Their ages were not far apart, and they were all in training for a college education. Their tastes were much alike ; they were enthusiastic students, lovers of knowledge and untiring in its pursuit. They soon became friends and continued to be friends to the end of their lives. They went to the same college and afterward into different professions, but they always kept watch of one another. Of these, two died in maturest age, and I alone survive. The first to leave us was John Morgan, of whom I can never think but with deep emotion and admiration for his profound learning, his guileless nature, and his devout life. Long useful and honored as professor at Oberlin, he now sleeps by the shore of that inland sea which pours its waters over the cliffs of Niagara. The second, Mark Hopkins, descended into the grave two years behind his comrade, and he sleeps here under these waving trees.

The manner of his death was more remarkable even than the life which it ended. He had passed the day before pleasantly, had driven out at twilight to take the evening air, stopped to drink at a familiar spring whose waters were especially

pure and sweet, had returned to his evening meal in the quiet of his home, with only his wife beside him, and retired to rest as he was wont to do. The next day, the day of his death, he remained in-doors, being a little restless. During the night he became more restless, rose from his bed, and took two or three turns in the room, and then seating himself in a chair by the side of the bed, said to her who had been his constant companion for more than fifty years, "This is a new sensation; I think it must be death," and without lying down or saying another word, fell quietly into the sleep of death. Without a pang, unless the momentary restlessness be deemed a pang, and without other warning than such as I have described, his soul passed out of the world he had served so bravely and so long.

It was fitting that he should live a long life for the finishing of his work; it was fitting that he should die in June, when the day was longest, the air softest, and the flowers of forest and field richest and sweetest. He was a lover of nature, and if he could have chosen his time to die, I think it would have been when he could lay his head upon the lap of his mother earth in the gentlest and brightest hours of the year.

It is a little more than a twelvemonth since I heard beyond the sea of the sudden death of this eminent man, my life-long friend. I could not look upon his face as he lay in death, I could not follow him to the grave, but my love traveled

swifter than light, and with my mind's eye I saw him laid to rest amid the scenes he loved so well.

When I reached my home after months of absence, I was honored with a request from the trustees of the college, his college and mine, to tell them what I knew concerning the person and the life of this greatest teacher of his generation, a life that had been so good and so great, and had come in its fulness to so sudden an end. In accepting the invitation I not only perform a duty laid upon me by the generous confidence of these guardians of the College, but I pay what tribute I can to an exalted character to which we all owe so much. It is to be hoped that the whole body of the alumni, a great company scattered over different parts of the land, will erect a fitting memorial of this their foremost man, a memorial that will not pass away like my winged words, but stand on foundations of stone through coming ages.

How can I portray this character and this life? The life was uneventful. Our friend did not serve in the councils or the battles of his country. He was a leader, but his leadership was silent; he impressed himself upon his generation, but the impression was gentle; he was a thinker, but his thoughts were uttered not in passionate words, rushing like a storm, but in calm language, like the soft-falling words of Ulysses, which fell as fall the winter snow-flakes through the still air.

Let us in imagination place him before us, as we have so often seen him in this church, walking up

the aisle or sitting on this platform; tall, thin, wiry in shape and motion, slightly bent, with broad shoulders, an ample forehead and a mild hazel eye. With this venerable and beloved figure thus present, let me briefly describe his life and work.

There are few men of whom it can be said that they produced distinct currents in the movements of their generation, and whether he was one of these can only be determined by the generations to come, but we may already claim that he impressed himself so strongly upon hundreds of young men who came within the range of his oral teaching, that they diffused their impressions upon thousands and tens of thousands of their countrymen, and that by the solidity of his character and the influence of his writings he added immensely to the strength of the moral and religious sentiment of his time, and furthermore that he opened in some directions new views of great truths.

If I should seek to express in fewest words my idea of President Hopkins as a teacher and writer, I should say that he was a Puritan teacher and philosopher. He was a Puritan by birth and by education. The Puritans have so often been described that it should seem superfluous to describe them again. Macaulay mentions the simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, and their stiff posture, their long graces at table and their Hebrew names; but these were certainly not peculiarities of all the Puritans, and even where they existed they were often

counter-balanced by many great qualities and virtues. Extravagance and excess are not infrequently the outcome of high fervor when unaccompanied by self-control. The Puritan was a sincere and God-fearing man, who made the Holy Scripture his only rule of faith and practice, and believed in a special Providence controlling all the affairs of life. Sincerity and faith were his characteristics. In these respects Hopkins was a Puritan. The Puritanism with which he was imbued was not the Puritanism of Charles the First's reign, when large masses of the English people were uneducated, but the Puritanism of New England in its best estate, where every man was instructed in the common branches of learning, studied for himself the Bible and other religious books, debated and voted in the town-meeting, and knew very well the civil polity of his state. The life of a Puritan was fashioned after his idea of his relations with his Maker. He was heart and soul dependent upon the All-wise and the Almighty, and all that he did, with all that he thought, was interwoven with that great idea.

The township in which President Hopkins was born was an example of Puritanism in its most pronounced, but in its most attractive aspect; nestled in the mountains, amid scenery varied and enchanting in all its variety; occupied by farmers, each holding his acres in fee and each as nearly independent in his outward circumstances as it is possible for man to be; looking up to God in

morning and evening prayer, thanking him at every meal; frugal without meanness; begirt with sons and daughters educated in the common school, and all helping in the labors of the farm and household. Intermixed with these were a few families of higher culture and graceful manners, who served to throw a charm over the little community. From all dwellings, high and low, there went every Sunday a procession to the meeting-house to hear the minister and discuss the sermon afterward, all regarding him as the first man in the township, the lawyer and squire as the second, and the doctor as the third. This township, as I have said, presented at the time of Hopkins's birth the best example of a New England Puritan community. Such men were they, who, when the hour struck for resistance to tyranny, stood forth manfully for their firesides and their altars, "fired the shot heard round the world," and finally wrought out that marvelous scheme of self-government which has already spread itself from sea to sea, and is silently making its way by force of example to the dominion of mankind.

Having said thus much of President Hopkins as a Puritan, let me say something of him as a philosopher. Milton in the *Comus* makes one of his characters exclaim :

How charming is divine philosophy !
 Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
 But musical as is Apollo's lute.

What then is philosophy, in its first and truest sense? It is not merely love of knowledge, as its etymology indicates, but the love of knowledge and the pursuit of truth in all its forms. The highest branches of philosophical studies are those which embrace moral and mental phenomena. President Hopkins was a philosopher in each of these senses; he studied and taught intellectual philosophy, as few men have studied and taught it; he also studied and taught moral philosophy, as hardly any man of his time has done.

The phenomena of the mind, that mysterious agency which no man can explain and no man comprehend, and which we know only by its subtle phenomena; to those phenomena he applied his most discriminating and vigorous intellect, with such result that few of his contemporaries understood them so well, or discussed them so intelligently. But it was in the domain of moral philosophy that his mind made its greatest effort, and reached its highest success; that philosophy which teaches the relations of man with God, and of man with man and other existences higher and lower, of all subjects the greatest in dignity and aim.

His studies were marked by the simplicity and truth which pervaded his life and affected all that he did and all that he thought. With the exception of the Bible, whose authority he never disputed, he was emancipated from all authority, and thought only for himself and by himself. He disdained all sham or tinsel, all subterfuge or equivo-

cation, and looked steadily through the best light at whatever object he sought to know. The directness of his methods was as remarkable as the indirection with which many men pursue what they seek. And the simplicity and clearness with which he explained what he knew were almost as pleasing as the truth which he expounded. There was never any pretension in his manner or his language. His life was a standing lesson of simple truth, and his opinion and counsel were lessons of wisdom enlightened by study and experience.

If it should be said that he lacked the poetic in his composition, in other words that he lacked romance, I should reply that he had something better than romance. He was wedded to the reality of things. Yet he said on one occasion to a professor: "I too am a mystic." But who is not a mystic? What reflecting person is there, who can look upon the firmament of countless suns above him, upon the earth beneath him careering through space at the rate of a million and half of miles a day, bearing twelve hundred millions of souls, and then turn to his own body and soul, as mysterious as all things else, without feeling awed and bewildered, and ready to exclaim: "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty." All, all is mystery, what we are, whence we are, and whither we are going!

Truth, simple and unadorned, was the object of Hopkins's affection. Far was it from his thoughts to teach logic to his pupils that they

might acquire the power to "make the worse appear the better reason and perplex and dash maturest counsel," but he taught them the best way to reason, that they might find out the truth and maintain the right.

As a teacher he was simply incomparable. Gen. Garfield, at an alumni dinner five or six years before he became president, said he would rather be taught in a college where Mark Hopkins was teacher, though the buildings had nothing but pine slabs to cover them, than in the best endowed university of the country under ordinary teaching. This, though exaggerated, was the expression of an opinion formed after his own experience at Williams, and his observation of other colleges. The highest art of the teacher is to make the pupil not only learn, but think and reason. President Hopkins, in explaining a subject to the student, had the rare faculty of making him not only listen, but think and ask questions, until pupil and teacher found themselves engaged together in the ever fresh pursuit of truth.

Agassiz desired that the word "teacher" should be engraved upon his tombstone. Of all offices and titles that of teacher is the most honorable, for out of it grows all others. It imparts knowledge and creates character. Beginning with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and running down through the ages to Roman medieval and modern teachers, to the heads of colleges and high schools in Europe and America, and even to the humbler

instructors in the common schools of a country ; the body of teachers forms a great hierarchy, in which it is an honor to be enrolled in any grade from the highest to the lowest. Hopkins was one of the princes in this hierarchy. He was worthy to have stood by Socrates, when he drank the hemlock, to have walked with Plato in the Academy, or to have disputed with Aristotle.

Besides the teaching by the living voice and pen, there is another and better, teaching by example. The continuity of the human race, without a break, from generation to generation, gives to example a significance and force, far above mere precept. The latter describes the object to the understanding ; the former paints it to the eye. The examples of Socrates and Washington, for instance, have done more for the encouragement of men than hosts of precepts. To be told how to live is one thing, to be told how one has lived is another and greater lesson. In this respect as in others President Hopkins was a teacher. He taught by example all, and more than all, that he taught by voice and pen.

If we turn now to character, as meaning temper and demeanor, we should say that he was all kindness and at the same time all firmness. In his family and among his intimate friends he was gentleness itself, but never wayward or uncertain. The government of the college in his hands was perfect. The students obeyed him because they loved him, and at the same time had a salutary

fear of him. They knew that his motives were the kindest, while his hand was the steadiest.

During his life Williams College became, as I think, and I hope the thought is not born of the wish, a model institution for the training of American youth in the highest branches of academical study. The larger colleges not less than the universities seem to me to bring together a greater number of students than can well be cared for in a single institution. The supervision of a thousand or a half a thousand pupils by president and professors must of necessity be less individual than the supervision of two hundred or two hundred and fifty. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that when a greater number than these come together the classes must be divided, which is always a misfortune. The four years of the college course are the formative years of a man's life; years, too, in which the frolics and freaks of youth are more abundant than in later or even in earlier years. So much more is there need of constant supervision over the conduct of the student, while for the mere purpose of his instruction, the relation of the pupil to his teacher should be the closest. Thus it was with the great teachers of antiquity, and their relations with their pupils serve to explain the marvelous results which followed in developing some of the greatest minds that have taken the lead of the world. My ideal of an American college is that a class should hardly exceed fifty in number, that it should be taught

through recitation and by question and answer, and that when this happens, and the professors come to their work with an aptitude for teaching, a love and the proper training for it, the institution is the best for our people. Of the students which Williams College yearly certifies to the world, I can say no less than this, that they indicate by their faces and their bearing a pluck and self-confident energy, which I have not seen surpassed anywhere; whether it be owing to the frugal habits which the college inculcates, or to the less opulent regions from which the pupils are chiefly recruited, or to an unseen influence, from the constant presence of these massive hills, imparting something of their hardihood.

I have said that President Hopkins never served in the councils of his country. I mean, of course, the official councils connected with the government of the state. There are, however, other councils in which the citizen may be engaged, with results not less important than if he held a public station. For thirty years, that is from 1857 till his death, President Hopkins presided over the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This long service in so honorable a post was due not only to his eminent qualifications but also to the historical connection which this college has had with missions in foreign lands. You all know, for it is one of those transactions of which we boast, the incident, little in itself, but great in its consequences, which led five

students to take shelter under a haystack from a summer thunder-storm, during which they offered a prayer, sang a hymn, and made a vow that they would devote their lives to the propagation of the gospel among the unchristian communities of the world; and you know how those young men fulfilled their vow and what came of the fulfillment; how one of them went to the coast of Africa and died on his way home; how another went to Ceylon; and how, out of their efforts, grew the American Board; how another son of Williams went to the Hawaiian Islands and converted that famous group to the true God. Think of the great conquerors who have waded through blood to annex provinces or usurp kingdoms, and compare their deeds with the works of these five men in usefulness and honor. Here we have the Mission Park for their monument; but there are statelier monuments to them in many a far-off land; in the volcanic islands which shelter and surround Honolulu, in the cinnamon groves of Ceylon, and the jungles and marshes of the Dark Continent. The voyager, as he sails northward from the Capes or from Australasia, hails the peaks of the Hawaiian islands, seen far off at sea, as the signs of welcome land; but he can see there, also, the everlasting witnesses of the labors of a son of Williams. I have myself been a witness of mission establishments on the banks of the Nile and the plains of India. The last persons I saw in Australia were two mission-

aries, man and wife, standing on the northeast cape, which looks into the Arafura sea, waving their farewell to us, as we sailed away among the net-work of islands that stretches to the southeast cape of Asia. We Americans think that we have much to boast of, and so we have (though we sometimes boast of that we have not), but of that which we have and of which we may justly boast, American missions are not the least achievements of American philanthropy and American energy.

May I in closing say a few words of President Hopkins as a personal friend. He was to me as a brother. We started on the voyage of life together, from the same shore, each in his own barque, but keeping always within hailing distance of each other. I knew, as he knew, that if evil befell either, the other would hasten to the rescue. We have had our good and our evil days, but the good have prevailed over the evil. Now from my barque still lingering on the sea, I wave my parting salutation to him safely landed on the shore :

“ Green be the turf above thee,
 Friend of my better days !
 None knew thee but to love thee,
 Nor named thee but to praise.”

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